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In this issue . . .

*Kiran Cunningham and
Hannah McKinney*
Building Equitable
Communities—A New
Role for City Hall



John S. Earle
Comparative Analysis of
Enterprise Data (CAED): A
Research and Data Agenda



New Books

Vol. 15, No. 3

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Kiran Cunningham and Hannah McKinney

Building Equitable Communities—A New Role for City Hall

What if city hall could leverage its power to address the big urban problems of the day—problems that, at first glance, municipal government would seem incapable of attacking in meaningful ways? Under the auspices of the National League of Cities (NLC), we have been exploring the role of city hall as a lead actor in transforming cities by making them more livable and equitable. The literature on local governance and urban politics provides little guidance for this kind of research, because the prevailing assumption is that city hall is an entity to be acted upon or an institution to be used in service of business and development interests. If city hall is portrayed as an actor, it is only in the sense of acting as a vehicle for the status quo, that is, as an agent of the elite whose primary interest is in maintaining existent power relations. Moreover, in cases where city hall leaders act otherwise, the literature suggests that it is only under pressure from associations and grassroots movements outside of city hall. As a result, little work has been done exploring the capacities of city hall to enhance economic equity, increase political inclusion, and build social capital.

National League of Cities leaders, however, were aware of innovative local programs and policies in increasing numbers of cities that do just this. We

received funding from the Kellogg Foundation to document these practices, which resulted in the book *Tapping the Power of City Hall to Build Equitable Communities: 10 City Profiles* (Cunningham, Furdell, and McKinney 2007).¹ In this work, we conclude that “municipal leaders have refused to accept that they are unable to do anything about poverty and other inequities. Examples like San Jose’s Strong Neighborhood Initiative, poverty reduction initiatives in Kalamazoo [Michigan] and Savannah

Our current research develops strategies for helping city hall leaders use their powers to leverage the entire community’s assets in the service of building more equitable communities.

[Georgia], Burlington’s [Vermont] Legacy project and Indianapolis’s Peterson Plan all illustrate innovative ideas, strong partnerships and ways that city halls are modeling values of fairness, diversity and inclusiveness” (p. 269).

Our current research develops strategies for helping other city hall leaders use their powers to leverage the entire community’s assets in the service of building more equitable communities. Working with the NLC, we mined the data from the 10 case studies

and developed technical assistance roundtables for city officials and their community partners that help them identify the capacities and assets at their disposal and develop specific strategies for making their communities more equitable.

Prevailing Assumptions about City Hall

Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers helped shape the modern sense of American democracy in their classic work of political philosophy, *On Democracy* (1983). They epitomize the prevailing view of city hall in *Associations and Democracy* (1995) when they claim that “politics is still largely a game of resources, not a forum of principles . . . Unless one is prepared to make the implausible assumption that the state can resist the demands and supplications of organized business interests, in an environment densely populated by those interests, problems of faction will remain” (p. 25).

Similarly, in an article in *Urban Affairs Review*, Eisinger (1998) says, “The absence of a growing stream of federal dollars has meant that city political leaders cannot afford, fiscally or politically, to push an agenda of social and racial reform financed by

today. He focuses on how participation and deliberation can make public governance, at all levels, more fair and effective. He and his coauthor, Erik Olin Wright, call for a new paradigm for understanding urban politics and development. They envision “applying the abstractions of democratic theory to concrete situations and then revising theory in light of empirical observation” (p. 231).

We contend that the task of applying theory to concrete situations will be difficult because of three flawed assumptions in the theory that hinder scholars from even asking questions about how city hall can be an agent of change in the direction of equity: 1) elected and appointed officials in city hall will never use their power and influence to craft their own equity agendas, 2) even if they wanted to do so, their hands would be tied by the ruling regimes and the institutional and structural arrangements within which they operate, and 3) the caliber and character of local officials are such that they would never think of leading such an agenda. Hence, the idea that city hall would take on an equity agenda remains unexplored.

Using City Hall Capacities to Enhance Equity

Issues of equity—which we define as equal access to the economic, political, and social resources of the community—lie at the root of most of the big, complex problems facing communities today. Underlying homelessness, poverty, and violence, for example, are fundamental economic, political, and social inequities. Increasing equity is a vehicle for chipping away at the systemic and structural bases of these big problems. Building economic equity involves increasing residents’ real incomes by reducing their expenses, increasing their wages, and/or building their assets. Enhancing political equity entails creating systems that ensure all residents are treated fairly and can participate equally in local government processes. Increasing social equity entails building social capital at the community, neighborhood, and individual

levels and/or reconnecting people and neighborhoods to the community’s social and cultural resources.

Increasing access to the community’s resources, however, is constrained (or enhanced) by discriminatory practices. Discrimination based upon race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or other characteristics is embedded in institutions. Dismantling the institutional structures of discrimination is essential to sustaining increases in political, economic, and social equity.

City leaders have a host of capacities

City leaders have a host of capacities that they can mobilize to dismantle discriminatory practices and increase the access to the community’s economic, political, and social resources.

that they can mobilize to dismantle discriminatory practices and increase the access to and availability of the community’s economic, political, and social resources. Capacities are the programs, policies, and practices that city halls have at their disposal, and any capacity can be mobilized in service of equity. For example, city hall’s economic development capacities can be used in neighborhoods to target commercial corridor redevelopment, fight blight, or assemble property for community development use. Participatory governance can be enhanced by including neighbors in planning processes or by using neighborhood priority boards and citizen academies. Our research has led to the development of an inventory of over 100 capacities that city hall officials can use to identify existing and potential programs, policies, and practices that they can use to increase equity.

Being strategic about the use of capacities ensures real change in both access to community resources and reduction of discrimination practices. Being strategic also leads to the creation of sustainable ways of operating that are both efficient and politically viable. While programs and policies will certainly change as a city’s circumstances

Municipal leaders have refused to accept that they are unable to do anything about poverty and other inequities.

local taxpayers alone. Nor can municipal leaders find much encouragement for defying these realities: left to confront the great urban, racial, and economic polarities, few elected officials would be so foolhardy as to risk inevitable failure by initiating solutions based solely on the modest and limited resources that they themselves can raise. It is far easier—and the outcome more certain—to lower taxes, reduce government employment, and fill potholes” (pp. 322–323).

Archon Fung, a professor of public policy at Harvard, is one of the leading scholars in participatory governance

change, a strategic approach to the work will ensure that the emphasis on equity enhancement becomes embedded in the way city hall does business. For example, when a city's economic development department evolves into a community and economic development department,

a city's understanding of development becomes more comprehensive and linked to issues of equity.

Table 1 shows examples of how strategic city hall officials use their capacities to enhance political, social, and economic equity. In each of these cities,

leaders developed equity agendas in such a way that even though specific programs and initiatives have evolved and changed over time, and city leadership has changed, the focus on enhancing equity has remained.

After studying the capacities mobilized and strategies employed in these and other cities, we wondered if it were possible to use this knowledge to jump-start equity agendas in other cities. In other words, how could an intervention be designed that would help city hall officials generate the political will necessary to prioritize an equity agenda and mobilize, leverage, and maximize city hall capacities to build more equitable communities in a politically viable, effective, and sustainable way?

That question has driven our most recent work with the NLC. To date, we have worked with seven cities as part of the NLC's Kellogg-funded Municipal Action to Reduce Poverty Project. These seven cities differ in demographics, size, region, and challenges and opportunities facing them. The one constant is the steadfast commitment of city hall officials and their partners to build more equitable communities and embed this orientation into city hall programs and practices for the long term. Roundtable participants take stock of the social and political landscape of their city and the capacities at their disposal to develop a strategic action plan to begin the work of building a more equitable community. Our work with these cities confirms a key finding in our earlier work that each city hall "draws on its unique charter responsibilities, legislative authorities, local strengths, and history to create an equity agenda. Most of these equity agendas are neighborhood based and directed at improving the quality of life for low-income residents, and these agendas in turn serve to make the city more attractive to investors" (Cunningham, Furdell, and McKinney 2007, p. 270).

These roundtables also generate additional knowledge and insights about the process of undertaking an equity agenda that we are using to develop materials that can be more broadly distributed to city officials who wish

Table 1 Examples of Equity-Enhancing Programs and Practices

City	Equity-enhancing strategy	Kind of equity
Baltimore, MD Healthy Neighborhoods Initiative	Pursued a neighborhood-level real estate investment initiative	Economic: "It's at the grass-level that you can intervene and get a vacant or unoccupied house put back into active use. You win these battles block by block, neighborhood by neighborhood." —Councilmember James Kraft
Burien, WA Demographic Project	Using census and other data, engaged the community in conversations about Burien's demographic shifts as a means of building social capital	Political and social: "How do we ensure that as the community changes it remains cohesive? How do we bring new people into our community and help them participate in the civic life?" —Assistant City Manager David Cline
Burlington, VT Legacy Project	Used partnerships and coalitions to create economic security for all families	Economic, political, and social: "We've taken significant steps towards ensuring that Burlington balances and integrates economic development, environmental protection, social equity, and education." —Mayor Peter Clavelle
Charlotte, NC City Within a City Initiative	Used data to mobilize partners and target investments to revitalize and stabilize fragile neighborhoods	Social and economic: "The indicators speak for themselves about the problems—you publish those and decisions revolve around those issues." —Stanley Watkins, Neighborhood Development Key Business Executive
Rochester, NY Neighbors Building Neighborhoods (NBN) Initiative	Created neighborhood-level planning groups to identify each neighborhood's needs, requirements, and issues, as well as the assets available to address these issues.	Political and social: "NBN was a way to begin to reinvent the relationship between government and citizens. If we're going to create any kind of change, it has to significantly involve the people in the community." —Tom Argust, Commissioner of Community Development

SOURCE: Cunningham, Furdell, and McKinney (2007).

to take on this work in a more strategic fashion. The desire to do this work is clearly out there, and city officials are looking for the tools to help them do the work. Examining what is currently being done and using the roundtables to test these tools is producing a toolkit of strategies to help city officials develop equity-enhancing programs, policies, and practices that are politically viable, effective, and sustainable. Any city hall can do an equity-enhancing program. However, by utilizing the whole range of capacities at their disposal, city hall can strategically mobilize the community's assets to address the issues of inequity that underlie most of the problems facing urban areas today.

Note

This book is available on-line at http://www.nlc.org/resources_for_cities/programs_services/poverty_reduction_strategy_project/poverty2006.aspx.

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Kiran Cunningham is a professor of anthropology at Kalamazoo College. Hannah McKinney is a professor of economics at Kalamazoo College and a visiting scholar at the Upjohn Institute.

John S. Earle

Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data (CAED)

A Research and Data Agenda

Ten years ago, an economist leafing through the major professional journals would have been hard-pressed to find many articles using firm-level data. Particularly unusual were studies using comprehensive panel data on all enterprises in a single economy, and still rarer, practically unknown, were analyses of such data for multiple countries. One of the most important developments in economic research over the last decade is the growing analysis of such databases. The new data provide the opportunity for revisiting many of the classic empirical questions in economics, this time with data at the appropriate level of aggregation—the business that is the decision-making unit. The data also permit and stimulate the analysis of many new questions that economists could not even dream of addressing with previous data resources. Together, the data and accompanying research agendas are transforming much of economics and public policy analysis.

The Upjohn Institute has contributed to these developments both through in-house research and by partnering with other research and policy groups to organize a recent international conference and a new research network including economists and statistical agency officials from around the world. This article provides a brief, selective overview of the new types of data and research, and then discusses the Institute's organizational efforts, in particular the Conference on Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data (CAED) and the research network.

New Types of Enterprise Data

While economists have studied firm-level data sets for a long time, the quantity, quality, and availability of the data have all vastly expanded

in recent years. Earlier data sets on businesses tended to be small sample surveys focused on specialized topics and containing only cross-sectional information. Individual researchers frequently assembled these data on their own, or they organized the collection for the purpose of a particular research project. Limited funding generally resulted in small-scale data sets, little standardization of variables, and little sharing of data among researchers. Moreover, despite the usefulness, indeed the necessity, of such data for answering a variety of questions, the tendency of the economics profession to award little credit for data collection meant that most economists felt only weak incentives to expend effort in this area. It was much easier to work with standard, existing databases on households or industry, regional, and economy-wide aggregates.

The new data sets on businesses tend to rely on governmental sources, and as a consequence they are more systematic and much larger in scale. Both the national statistical offices and the agencies administering government programs have regularly collected data on firms and establishments in order to monitor the macroeconomy, collect taxes, and evaluate policies. But researchers were unable to obtain access to the business-level information. A number of recent developments—growing openness of governmental agencies, increasing pressure from the research community, improving technologies to process data and protect confidentiality, and mounting emphasis on empirical research, particularly at the micro level—have led to accelerating access and analysis of the microdata.

The new data sets have several important advantages. Numbers of observations are much larger, permitting stronger conclusions from a given

analysis. In some cases, the data are “universal,” covering the entire population of businesses in a country or a particular sector (all of manufacturing industry, for example). In other cases, these databases make use of universal sampling frames, which solves one of the biggest problems confronting researchers carrying out their own firm surveys: constructing a representative, random sample.

The new data are also usually longitudinal, containing multiple observations over time for a given business. This panel dimension of the

The quantity, quality, and availability of firm-level data have all vastly expanded in recent years.

data facilitates statistical techniques to control for unobserved differences across firms, and it permits researchers to study dynamics—changes in firm behavior and responses to shifts in the firm’s operating environment. When combined with universal coverage, a dynamic analysis can also address questions involving entry and exit of businesses from the market. The dynamics of firm turnover are not only of great potential consequence for economic growth and worker welfare, but they also may be important statistical factors to control for, as analyses based on only continuing firms are likely to be biased if exit or entry is nonrandom.

A significant drawback of the new data sets is the limitation to a relatively small set of variables used for constructing aggregates and evaluating programs. Moreover, while the data have become much more readily available for researchers than they were in the past, large obstacles to access persist in many countries. Cross-country comparisons are facilitated by some degree of standardization in the collection of data for national income accounting, but idiosyncrasies in definitions of variables and in the rules for inclusion of observations (in the sample or universe) remain. Thus, individual surveys focused on particular topics will

continue to play an important role, as will the collaboration of researchers with knowledge of local idiosyncrasies in data, policies, and institutions with the data providers to link, harmonize, improve, and make available many types of data.

One important subclass of enterprise data sets deserves particular mention: linked employer-employee data (LEED). Such data contain information on the composition of employment within firms, including the characteristics and, usually, the wages of workers. The information is useful for controlling for differences across firms in the workforce and for studying many questions involving the internal organization and compensation structures of firms. When the data contain longitudinal information on both employers and employees, it is also possible to control for unobserved firm attributes in analyzing worker outcomes and to study job mobility of workers across firms. In essence, the data permit analysis of both the demand and the supply sides of the labor market.

New CAED Research

The new data permit many of the fundamental questions in empirical economics to be studied at the level of the enterprise, the decision maker for many questions underlying economic growth and welfare. In traditional economics, for example, the entire economy (or an entire industry) is modeled as if it were a single firm with a single production function it uses to transform inputs into output. With the aggregate data corresponding to such a model, estimation of basic parameters is at best difficult, because sample sizes are too small to permit reliable inference. More importantly, the assumption of a common technology across diverse industries is untenable. To take one example, in projecting the impact of a rise in oil prices on employment levels, the researcher needs to estimate cross-elasticities of input demands, which depend on technological ease of substitution and market factors that vary across industries. Using industries as observations to estimate these relationships for the economy as a whole fails because the industry and

economy-wide aggregate relationships are in general different, so no inferences are possible. These problems can only be avoided by moving to the firm level, using the data corresponding to the decision maker, and estimating separately by groups operating in relatively homogeneous markets and with homogeneous technology.

Many important economic questions cannot even be empirically posed in the absence of appropriate enterprise data. One of the earliest lessons from firm-level research is that firms display enormous heterogeneity in their performance and behavior, even within narrowly defined categories and industries. The diversity of outcomes contradicts standard theoretical models of competitive industries and frictionless environments as well as empirical analyses based on aggregate (sectoral or regional) data. The factors leading some firms to be more productive than others are fundamental determinants of economic growth, and they are fundamental puzzles for economists, but they can only be satisfactorily investigated with firm-level panel data. Among the factors that the new literature

The new data permit many of the fundamental questions in empirical economics to be studied at the level of the enterprise, the decision maker for many questions underlying economic growth and welfare.

is addressing are technology and R&D, ownership and corporate governance, and government policies and institutions.

Another set of questions that requires enterprise data, ideally with universal coverage, concerns industry dynamics. Stretching back to Schumpeter, there has been much casual discussion of the potentially important role played by the creative destruction process in capitalist economies. But the data required to investigate the nature of exit and entry have only recently become available. The important research issues concern the pace and the determinants of the

firm turnover process, as well as its consequences for growth: the shares of entrants and exiters, their relative productivity levels, and the magnitudes of costs of entry, exit, and remaining in the market. Closely related policy questions involving these costs include regulatory barriers to entry, financial constraints on growth, competition from entrants and international trade, provision of complementary institutions, and softness of budget constraints.

A final set of issues involves the consequences of the firm-level restructuring and reallocation processes for workers. Do employees gain when their employer's productivity improves? Or does the improvement more often come at their expense? These questions can be addressed in the context of any of the factors or policies affecting firm performance and industry dynamics. Using firm-level data, the outcomes for levels of employment and average wages of the firm may be estimated. Using LEED, it is possible to estimate heterogeneous outcomes for different types of workers and, in some cases, to trace the mobility patterns and long-term consequences for displaced workers.

Ultimately, the analysis of firm-level data promises new insights into the

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causes of differences in the "wealth of nations." Most firm-level research has been carried out for single countries, but many of the important decisions underlying international differences in productivity and incomes reside within firms. International comparative research on enterprise data can exploit variation in policies and institutions and their effects on enterprise behavior, thus revealing the

reasons for cross-country differences in firm performance and industry dynamics.

The CAED Conference and Network

In order to bring together scholars and civil servants working with the many strands of research and types of enterprise data, the Upjohn Institute recently organized an International Research Conference on Comparative Analysis of Enterprise Data in partnership with the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary. The conference was the 8th in a series of CAED conferences that emerged from workshops at the U.S. Department of Commerce in the mid-1990s and have since been held in several countries. The major sponsor of the Conference was the COST (Cooperation in Science and Technology) program of the European Science Foundation, and other cosponsors included the Hungarian National Bank, the Institute for Employment Research (IAB, Nuremberg), the Hungarian Competition Authority, the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Opinion Research Center, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The conference inaugurated a new international network organized by the Upjohn Institute and the Central European University with the support of a four-year grant from COST. The purpose of the network is to bring together leading researchers from around the world to work with national statistical agencies and to collaborate on new cross-country comparative research investigating the roles of industry dynamics and firm performance in economic growth as well as their consequences for employees. The network will organize workshops and conferences following the lines of the research initiatives discussed above: industry dynamics, firm performance, and worker outcomes. In addition, a special working group will focus on issues of data access and quality, which are relevant for all researchers in this area.

The Upjohn Institute will continue to play an active role in CAED both by contributing research and by helping the network to expand to a wider range of countries and economists. The Budapest

conference already brought together researchers and data providers from 26 nations, but the CAED research agenda would clearly benefit from comparative analysis based on a larger and more diverse set of policies and institutional experiences. The network will also

Using LEED, it is possible to estimate heterogeneous outcomes for different types of workers and, in some cases, to trace the mobility patterns and long-term consequences for displaced workers.

encourage work on firm-level data within many different fields of interest and by a variety of types of economists. Some fields, including labor economics, industrial organization, and international trade, have been quick to incorporate firm-level data, but many more stand to benefit, as do researchers in other social sciences. Finally, the network will help foster the development of a new generation of researchers. Although competition for paper presentations at the Budapest conference was stiff (110 papers were accepted out of more than 260 responses to an open call), an unusual number of papers were coauthored by early stage researchers, including current graduate students. It seems safe to predict that CAED growth over the next 10 years will be even more rapid than in the past decade.

John S. Earle is a senior economist at the Upjohn Institute.

New Books from the Upjohn Institute

A Future of Good Jobs?

America's Challenge in the Global Economy

Timothy J. Bartik and
Susan N. Houseman, Editors

Can the U.S. economy generate healthy growth of good jobs—jobs that will ensure a steady improvement in the



standard of living for the middle class and that will offer a way out of poverty for low-income Americans? In this timely new volume, leading policy analysts examine the

challenges facing U.S. labor market policy and propose steps to make American workers and employers more competitive in the global economy.

"[This book] could hardly be better timed with respect to current trends in the American economy. The practical remedies offered are sensitive both to the realities of the U.S. labor force and to the needs and resources of U.S. employers." —*Jodie Allen, Senior Editor, Pew Research Center*

"Bartik and Houseman have assembled a first-rate team of economists to assess the problems of struggling workers. They offer cogent analyses of America's workplace problems. More important, they provide a timely set of prescriptions to address those problems. Many writers wring their hands at the challenges facing workers who are at the bottom of the pay ladder. The authors of this volume focus on the more difficult task of crafting humane but tough-minded solutions to the problem of shrinking wages." —*Gary Burtless, The Brookings Institution*

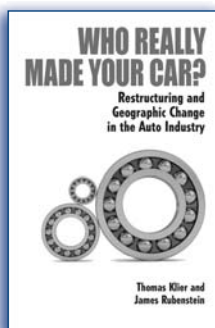
327 pp. 2008. \$40 cloth 978-0-88099-332-6
\$20 paper 978-0-88099-331-9.

Who Really Made Your Car?

Restructuring and Geographic Change in the Auto Industry

Thomas Klier and James Rubenstein

"A magisterial, encyclopedic review of who really makes the 15,000 parts



and components in your motor vehicle. More importantly, the authors examine the trends in technology, markets, and companies that will determine

where future auto parts will be made and who will get the jobs in America's largest manufacturing industry: auto parts manufacturing. No one has ever done this better in terms of information, insight, and clear, entertaining prose." —*Sean P. McAlinden, Center for Automotive Research*

"Klier and Rubenstein have turned the spotlight where many have seen only darkness and failure. The automotive supply business is responsible for 3/4 million jobs and several hundred billion dollars in the U.S. economy each year, yet I would wager that most people do not have a clue about the reach, complexity, and importance of the automotive supply chain. This book clears all that up."

—*W. Jeff Jeffery, IRMCO*

"[This book] is a well researched primer on the auto parts industry, with a treasure trove of facts, data, and anecdotes. The authors chronicle the rich history of the auto supply base and its key players, reminding us of how the industry has changed and continues to change over the years." —*Dennis C. Cuneo, Arent Fox LLP*

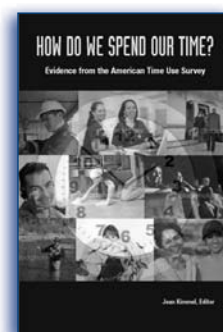
419 pp. 2008. \$40 cloth 978-0-88099-334-0
\$20 paper 978-0-88099-333-3.

How Do We Spend Our Time?

Evidence from the American Time Use Survey

Jean Kimmel, Editor

Economists have long been interested in the analysis of how people decide to spend their time. Up until recently, however, studies of this nature



were limited by a lack of high-quality time-use data. In 2003, after years of study and preparation, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics initiated the annual American

Time Use Survey (ATUS). Respondents report how they spend their time (in 15 minute intervals), with whom, and where. These detailed data open a window on how Americans spend their time and afford economists the opportunity to gain a better understanding of everyday life.

This new book offers contributions from a number of noted economists who exploit this new source of data to reveal findings that have numerous implications for the U.S. labor market. Topics examined include child care, housework, household production and consumption, and shift work. In each case, the focus is on the value of time and how time spent on one activity instead of another represents value gained for the first activity and value lost for the second.

Contributors include Daniel S. Hamermesh, Nancy Folbre, Jayoung Yoon, Cathleen D. Zick, W. Keith Bryant, Jennifer Ward-Batts, Jay Stewart, and Anne Polivka.

188 pp. 2008. \$40 cloth 978-0-88099-338-8
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